



Effective Communications in Hospitals

Promoting Meaningful Communications in Health Care

SUGGESTED SIGHTED GUIDE TECHNIQUES

Serving as a sighted guide for a blind individual is a personal service that you may want or need to provide. The following suggestions will help you be more effective in your role as a guide.

1. Always ask a person who is blind if assistance is desired. If so, make contact so she can grip your arm above the elbow. By holding onto your arm, the person can be guided – not led – and will not be pushed and pulled from place to place. Using the sighted guide technique, the guide and the companion walk virtually side by side, with the guide about a half step ahead of the traveler who is blind.
2. If you come to an area that is too narrow for both of you to pass through when walking side by side, place your “guiding” arm behind your back. This is a cue to your traveling companion to step behind you. When you have passed through the narrow spot, casually drop your guiding arm back to its original position.
3. Always pause briefly before a step up or down.
4. When using stairs, pause before stepping down or up to give the traveler who is blind a cue. Move at a pace that is comfortable for both of you. Pause again slightly when you reach the landing to provide the traveler a cue that “you’ve arrived”. Giving verbal cues is usually helpful.
5. When approaching doors, put your “guiding” arm in the position that indicates narrow spaces and tell the person whether the door opens toward or away from you and whether it opens to the left or right. The individual will catch the door as she walks through the doorway.
6. When the person you are guiding wishes to be seated, walk directly to a chair, make contact with the chair, and then let the individual seat herself.
7. Give the traveler some verbal description of the area(s) you are walking through.
8. When walking with someone with whom you have not previously traveled, verbal explanations may be helpful in all of the above situations.
9. Never leave a person who is blind alone in an open area. If you must leave, put her in contact with a landmark such as a wall, a counter, etc.
10. When getting in a car, walk with the person to the car door, explain her position in relationship to the car, and then allow her to check it out and get in by herself